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More housing for seniors coming

By LYNN McQUEEN

Construction of a new apartment complex for low income senior citizens, located on Highway 9 West in Bennettsville, should be complete in 8-10 months, according to the project manager.

Cedar Creek Apartments will be a complex of 30 one-bedroom housing units along with a community building, said project manager Clyde Hargrave of Weaver Cooke Construction of Greensboro, NC.

The buildings will feature vinyl siding and brick veneer. The majority of the construction will be quad buildings, with four apartment units per building, and one triplex, Hargrave said.

There also will be a community building with a large activity room, laundry facilities and a manager's office. "It will be designed for the residents to be able to gather together to participate in group activities, share meals, things like that," said Scott Redinger of Wilmington, construction consultant for the project.

The complex will be located off Highway 9 West behind Marlboro OB GYN. Site clearing began about two weeks ago.

The project came about through the

efforts of the John H. Wellons Foundation of Dunn, NC, a national sponsor of HUD Section 202 housing. The HUD 202 program provides affordable housing for low income elderly.

The Wellons Foundation sponsors the applications, and when they are approved, establishes a single purpose ownership corporation to take it over; in this case, the corporation will be called Cedar Creek Housing Inc.

The apartments will be available to residents ages 62 and older whose income is less than 50 percent of the area median income. In Marlboro County, this was \$16,200 for one person and \$18,500 for two people according to 2005 statistics.

Through the HUD 202 program, tenants pay only 30 percent of their adjusted income for housing expenses, which includes rent and utilities. HUD automatically deducts \$400 from senior citizens' annual income and also adjusts monthly income for reoccurring medical expenses such as heart medication or insulin.

"What makes this program work, and work well, for senior citizens is that it allows them to address two of

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their major expenses: health care costs and housing costs," Redinger said.

The Wellons Foundation has been around since 1950. It initially was formed to help low income young people with college expenses and expanded to include housing for senior citizens in 1982.

The foundation currently has 21 apartment complexes located in the two Carolinas and Virginia and others being planned. In the Pee Dee, these include Cannon Court Apartments in Dillon and Chesterfield Court Apartments in Cheraw.

According to Redinger, the foundation chooses communities in which to locate housing complexes by studying census and demographic information to determine which communities have the largest number of lower income elderly citizens relative to their size.

Don Wellons of the John H. Wellons Foundation could not be reached for comment by press time.